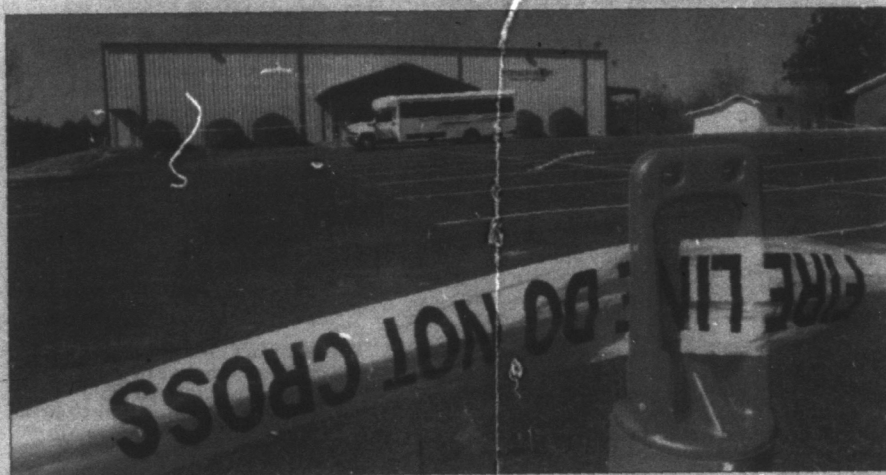


Trust in the Lord



CLOSE CALL — Yellow emergency tape surrounds the Family Life Center at Freedom Church, Myrick, in Jones County after the second floor collapsed during midweek activities on Feb. 19. Access to the interior of the building is restricted while inspections are underway. A number of youth who were meeting in the building at the time of the collapse were taken for medical observation, but all were released by midnight. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

Floor collapse unites church, community

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

A Mississippi Baptist congregation is crediting God with a miracle that no major injuries

were sustained when the second floor of their Family Life Center collapsed Feb. 19 while a youth group was meeting in the facility for midweek activities.

"We're still in an attitude of

praise and thanksgiving that no one was seriously injured. There wasn't a single broken bone or stitch," said Tommy Davis, the bivocational pastor of Freedom Church in Myrick, near Laurel. "Everyone who was taken to the hospital was back with their families by midnight."

Davis said the church held a special service the following

see COLLAPSE on p. 9

SBC Exec. Committee to debate proposed messenger changes

NASHVILLE (BP) — The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee will consider a proposal June 9 to update the SBC constitution regarding qualifications for churches to send messengers to the annual meeting.

During its Feb. 17-18 meeting in Nashville, the Executive Committee decided to place the item on its June 9 agenda prior to the SBC annual meeting in Baltimore to allow Southern Baptists time to discuss the proposed change and provide feedback.

The committee's decision will determine whether the proposed revision will be presented

to messengers at the June 10-11 SBC annual meeting.

The proposal to amend Article III came as a motion from the floor at last year's SBC annual meeting — the 16th annual meeting on this article in the past 35 years — to reevaluate the minimum qualifications for seating additional church messengers at the SBC.

Article III currently states that churches in friendly cooperation with the convention can send one additional messenger for every 250 members or for each \$250 per year "paid to the work of the Convention," an amount dating back to 1888.

Under the new proposal to

be considered at the June EC meeting on the Monday before the SBC annual meeting, each cooperating church that contributed to Convention causes during the preceding fiscal year would automatically qualify for two messengers.

Additional messengers would be recognized from a cooperating church by one of two options, whichever allows the greater number of messengers:

■ One additional messenger for each full percent of the church's undesignated receipts through any combination of gifts through the

see MESSENGER on p. 11

Page: 'Challenging' Cooperative Program giving days ahead

NASHVILLE (BP) — Southern Baptists face "challenging days" with Cooperative Program (CP) giving.

Frank Page, president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee, told committee members in Nashville, voicing hope for an upswing in giving.

While sharing his passion for CP and its role in supporting missions and ministry around the globe, Page said the momentum for the "1% CP Challenge" continues to grow for churches to increase CP giving by one percentage point of their budgets.

"I have written personal letters to almost 3,000 pastors thanking them for their involvement" in the 1% CP Challenge, Page said Feb. 17. "Our state executives are saying, 'Frank, please don't stop. Our people are just starting to get it... We won't stop.'"

"It is my passion that fuels my heart belief in this. I supported this before I was paid to support this. As a pastor I strongly supported over 10% of our church's undesignated receipts to the Cooperative Program."

Giving through CP is the best way to "concurrently, consistently and, yes, completely fulfill Acts 1:8 as a church body," he added. "Through that, you're involved in missions and ministries all over the world, all the time."

Philanthropic giving has increased in recent years, and 53% of churches say giving is up, Page reported. Despite increased giving in other areas, CP giving has continued to decrease through the years. In the last five years, CP gifts forwarded by churches have dropped 11%.

"In 1982, the average Southern Baptist church forwarded on 10.7% of its undesignated receipts to the Cooperative Program," Page said, "but in 2012 it was down to 5.41%. It's pretty much declined two-

tenths of a percent every year." One potential bright spot, Page said, is that the current 5.41% has held since 2012, a possible indicator the CP Challenge is beginning to resonate with more churches.

"We pray [the decrease has] ceased and will now tick back up," Page said. "That's our hope and prayer. We've been putting a lot of energy and effort, particularly trying to engage young ministers and unengaged ministers, to say, 'We challenge you to study it, look at it... Can you find a better way to be involved in Acts 1:8?'"

Biblical stewardship is the key to reversing the downward trend of giving, Page said. To help, the Executive Committee is renewing efforts with state Baptist conventions to implement comprehensive plans for biblical stewardship.

"I'm going to push churches to do more, to give more. When I ask you to give more, it doesn't come to the Executive Committee. We're lowering our Cooperative Program allocation so when you hear me beating the drum and asking for more, it's to go to these other entities and agencies to do that which God has called them to do."

see PAGE on p. 9



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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

Choose wisely

Each generation of Americans blessed with the privilege of suffrage has likely had occasion to believe that their votes were crucial to the future of the Republic. Given the many political crossroads we have confronted in our short history, they were probably right.

There was the fateful election of 1860, when the elevation of Abraham Lincoln to the U.S. presidency brought to a deadly climax one of the most contentious and destructive issues to have ever faced the country. The ultimate result was the bloodiest conflict in which the U.S. has ever been involved and, sadly, it was among ourselves.

Not as historically well-known is the election of 1864, which returned Lincoln to power but also propelled Andrew Johnson, Lincoln's vice-president, into the presidency when Lincoln was assassinated. Johnson's hardball political bungling of Reconstruction is considered by some historians as having set the stage for more than one hundred years of the worst kind of divisiveness in our public discourse.

In 1932, destitute American voters elected Franklin D. Roosevelt, who promised to pull the country back from the brink of economic and social collapse. Many students of the era credit Roosevelt with doing just that, while others believe his heavy-handedness prolonged the Great Depression and its hardships.

Either way, most people would agree that his dynastic reign as president changed the country in ways that are still with us today.

Elections have consequences. Elections in a democratic Republic like the United States have consequences that can last for a long time. Our generation has just such an election facing us in a few short months.

Nothing as monumental as the future of slavery, or the rebuilding of a war-ravaged country, or the last-chance economic revitalization of the world is on the ballot this time, but November 4 will indeed be a fateful election that could well determine the future of this country.

The headlines scream, "Election 2014: Fate of Traditional Marriage To Be Decided," and "More States To Legalize Pot?" Commentators of all and various stripes warn us that American society hangs in the bal-

ance. Reports of rallies in Washington and across the country that espouse completely different views of the country are commonplace on nightly news broadcasts.

The Ruling Class in Washington does not seem to have much respect for us. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, speaking at the time as a U.S. Senator and Democrat presidential candidate, told a reporter for *The Boston Globe*, "We have an electorate that doesn't always pay that much attention to what's going on so people are influenced by a simple slogan rather than the facts or the truth or what's happening."

U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada, some years back at opening of the new Visitor's Center at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, said, "My staff has always said, 'Don't say this,' but I'm going to say it again because it's so descriptive because it's true. In the summertime, because of the high humidity and how hot it gets here, you could literally smell the tourists coming into the Capitol, and that may be descriptive but it's true. Well, that is no longer going to be necessary."

The manifold insults and slights generated by political elitists who are technically employees of the very people they are offending, are matched only by the pronouncements of Hollywood types who, like many of our elected leaders, believe they have been magically granted some intellectual superiority over average Americans.

Much is at stake in this fall's election for American Christians, too. Some of the Talking Heads have said that social issues will have almost no bearing in this election, that this election is about the Tea Party and ObamaCare and the scope of government. Don't believe them.

The people we elect to office on November 4 will be representing us in ongoing debates on abortion, gambling, drug legalization, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, sanctity of marriage, and a host of other issues that will drive the direction of this country for a long time to come and determine the civic value of the lives of our children and grandchildren will lead.

Vote on November 4. Choose wisely among the candidates, after much prayer. It's that important. Like always, a lot is at stake.

Should marriage be privatized?

Young evangelicals are not rising to defend traditional marriage. Perhaps this is because they don't have the theological and intellectual tools to do so, or because they don't want to be derided and marginalized as "haters" of homosexuals or "on the wrong side of history." Many want marriage for themselves, but don't care how others define it.



Guest opinion
with Penna Dexter

Some people are asking, "Why not privatize marriage? Push the state out of this battle in the culture wars. Why should the state have to give its approval to the definition of marriage? Why not let denominations define marriage the way they deem correct?"

It won't work.

It might work if marriages really were permanent and people never got divorced, but there are certain disputes that have to be resolved when marriages end.

Baylor University philosophy and church-state studies professor Francis Beckwith writes: "What to do with children, property, state residency, freedom of movement, etc. when marital relationships break down are public issues. They are not private ones. Consequently, in such a privatization of marriage scenario, the state would actually become more intrusive into ecclesial matters than it is at present."

The public nature of marriage exists in part because in our society, and historically, marriage is the institutional arrangement that defines parenthood. Economist Jennifer Roback Morse is founder and president of the Ruth Institute, an organization devoted to encouraging lifelong married love. She writes that, "If no children were ever involved, adult sexual relationships simply wouldn't be any of the state's business."

However, she points out that the advent of no-fault divorce has involved the state "in the minutiae of family life," resolving "disputes over custody, visitation, and child support."

Of leaving marriage to the churches, Morse writes, "At this point in history, churches are not the ultimate legal authority for anything." In fact, the state is busy marginalizing the churches and their influence and even if the state were to somehow allow churches authority over the issues surrounding the children of divorce, it would still be called upon to settle disputes between people not of the same religion, or where one or the other (or both) claim no religion at all.

Given these realities, getting the state out of the marriage business is asking the impossible and, as Morse points out, "Assigning the state an impossible task amounts to giving it a blank check."

With marriage meaning different things to different people or groups, the state will only find itself more enmeshed in defining who counts as a parent. Morse writes, "Up to now, that job has been largely left to Mother Nature, with the state simply recording the natural reality of parenthood."

No-fault divorce, co-habitation, and same sex marriage have increased the state's role in marriage. The church must do a better job of teaching a theology of marriage, but it must not withdraw from the culture wars, especially the war over marriage.

Dexter is a former trustee of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, and frequent panelist on the Point of View syndicated radio program. Her weekly commentaries also air on the Bott and Moody radio networks. She resides in Dallas.

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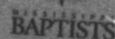
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Muslim bloodshed, Christian retaliation scar African nation

BANGUI, Central African Republic (BP) — An escalating cycle of violence between Christians and Muslims in Central African Republic is raising questions for missionaries about the future of the church in the region.

Retaliatory attacks between the two religious groups are wracking the western part of the nation with out-of-control bloodshed. According to BBC News, the republic is "a nation consumed by rage."

"There's a lot of stress, a lot of tension," said Ron Pontier, who has served for 30 years as a mission pilot for a Christian organization in Central African Republic (CAR) and neighboring countries.

There are also massacres, summary killings, and torture. A quarter of the country needs food aid urgently.

Seleka, an alliance of Muslim rebel groups, overthrew the government in March 2013 and attacked Christian businesses with widespread looting — part of a thrust to take over the country, which was formerly only 10-15% Muslim, Pontier said.

International peacekeepers came in to disarm the rebel alliance, finally overturning Seleka's power in January 2014, but that made way for a new problem, according to Pontier: A militia called anti-balaka, or anti-machete, that identifies itself as Christian began taking revenge on Seleka rebels and the Muslim population in general.

"The peacekeeping forces are having a huge problem, because if they disarm Muslims, the anti-balaka come in and kill the Muslims," Pontier said. "It's almost impossible to know how to bring the thing to an end."

Pontier keeps going there to encourage believers and pray with them for the fighting to stop. "They really need to have peace — that's the big thing. The Christians and Muslims need to be able to forgive and live together peacefully."

Nik Ripken (not his real name), an expert on the persecuted church in Muslim contexts, agreed. "The challenge for the Central African Republic is an answer to an old question for Africa that is still awaiting a positive, Africa-changing answer," said Ripken, who has served more than 25

years with the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"Per usual, Christians and Muslims in the CAR are divided along tribal fault lines. Racism perhaps is the consistent tool that Satan uses most often to terrorize the innocent, molest the girl child and kill indiscriminately," he said.

Many may wonder when Africa will stop being defined by its deep divides. Ripken said that is a big question that Jesus took even deeper.

"Jesus stated the obvious that it is easy to love one's friends, but He raised the bar when He commanded that we love our enemies. Christians, if indeed we are followers of Jesus, know that violence begets violence and the cycle never ends.

"Jesus calls His children to go first, lay down their guns, and actually believe that love wins over racism and hate."

Because of the violent instability, neither Pontier's organization nor the International Mission Board has missionaries stationed in Central African Republic. Missions efforts are limited to visits like the one Pontier made in early February.

The mayhem has taken a toll on the church too, Pontier said. "It's hard to tell how many churches are left — lots of people have been displaced, and many churches have gathered together, but because of the war, so many people are coming to Christ. Thousands and thousands are turning to the Lord in the midst of the persecution."

Pontier said, even so, he has a great fear that lack of discipleship will mean the slow death of Christianity in Central African Republic and its neighboring countries.

"Christians are not being disciplined and there is little personal spiritual growth, and it is sad for me to see that this is happening. Islam is really pushing to take over that whole area, and because it is considered 'reached,' a lot of missionary organizations don't put much effort into it."

Muslim Fulani herdsmen are slowly moving into Central African Republic and bringing their influence with them, Pontier said. BBC and other news outlets reference "a long



PRAY:

■ Pray for believers in Central African Republic to be shining lights in the midst of the darkness of war, hatred, tribalism and greed.

■ Ask God to direct the steps of missionaries so that they can make the contacts needed to encourage believers in CAR and to mobilize believers in nearby countries who could come in to help disciple Christians and reach out to unbelievers.

■ Pray that this country can become a place known for peace through knowing the Prince of Peace.

"Jesus stated the obvious that it is easy to love one's friends, but He raised the bar when He commanded that we love our enemies. Christians, if indeed we are followers of Jesus, know that violence begets violence and the cycle never ends. Jesus calls His children to go first, lay down their guns, and actually believe that love wins over racism and hate."

Nik Ripken

an expert on the persecuted church in Muslim contexts

war to come in which Muslims will seize back half the country for themselves."

Pontier said it makes him tremble when he thinks of how that might stifle the rapid spread of the Gospel taking place there right now.

"If we leave Central African Republic, if we leave Congo, if we don't disciple, probably within five to 10 years those places will be unreached."

That is one reason he keeps going into those countries: To encourage Christians to aggressively disciple.

Tim Cearley, IMB strategy leader for sub-Saharan Africa, echoes Pontier's focus. "My main prayer request for CAR and that whole western equatorial area is that God would raise up a team of experienced trainers — IMB and other internationals — to live in this area and serve as church-planting catalysts and researchers that help empower the many struggling churches to finish the task of reaching the lost."

Peyton Queen (not his real name) another IMB strategist, agreed, saying his prayer is

that the Lord would strengthen the believers to be a bold witness in spite of the suffering and disruption that is happening to them personally and to their countrymen.

"I pray that God would use these national believers to remain strong in their faith, and in spite of the difficulties that godly actions would accompany a strong verbal Gospel witness. We pray too that God would bring real peace to the nation and that neighboring countries would contribute to that peace as well."

CONNECT:

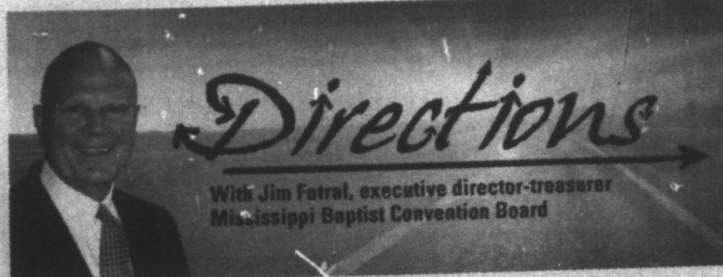
To learn more about IMB work in sub-Saharan Africa, visit subsaharanafrikanpeoples.imb.org and africastories.com.

Let me begin by saying that this is not a statement about any athletic team or school mascot. It is actually a verse of scripture, Philippians 3:2. As a youngster, probably in middle elementary grades, I remember marking this in my Bible. I had no clue as to what it was talking about, but I was fascinated by the fact that the Bible said, "Beware of the dogs." The truth is these dogs that the Apostle Paul was referring to were people who would do evil, mess you up, lead you astray and harm you. They could have been people who were religious leaders or they could have been people who were in or around the church who did not care about the Lord or His church, but cared about themselves.

Why in the world would Paul call them dogs? Well, you have to understand that in the first century dogs were far less domesticated and were oftentimes just packs of hounds that would roam the streets finding scraps and garbage wherever they could. They would harm folks who would try to bother them. They could be mean and vicious, but without a doubt the Apostle Paul had run into some people like that.

I must confess that through the years I have run into a few of the descendants of the ones that Paul met and, like dogs tend to be, they were either barking or growling about something. As you may know, there are hundreds of breeds of dogs. There are different sizes, shapes, length of hair and even dispositions. In this verse of scripture, Paul says, "Beware of the dogs." He was sending out a warning to the people in the church. The word, beware, means literally to take note of and mark them. While I cannot name all of the dogs that may show up in and around the church or at your home, it might be good just to mention a few of these dogs.

There is the quiet, crouching and stalking dog. This dog is not always noticed and may not appear to be vicious until he suddenly and shockingly almost rips your leg off. But do not be mistaken, this dog is dangerous, and can do real damage to the congregation. One night I was making a visit, and as



Beware of the Dogs

I got out of my car and was walking up toward the porch there was not a sound anywhere around. It appeared that the people were at home, but I hardly even thought about a dog being there. Crouched beside a post and almost hidden on the porch was this medium sized dog. As I stepped up on the porch, he did not growl but he was ferocious. He did not bite me because I jumped straight up, six feet in the air. It was a new Olympic record. When I came down he still did not get me, but it took me several weeks to get over the heart attack that he gave me.

I say that facetiously because I did not have a heart attack. But I can promise you this; my heart was racing umpteen beats beyond its norm. When this kind of dog comes to church, he is not there to be helpful, supportive or encouraging. He will just quietly, almost in stealth fashion, move about waiting for an opportunity to bite.

Another dog that I have observed on occasion is the constant barker. This is the dog that barks about everything. A cat goes across the yard and he barks. A leaf falls out of the tree, a door squeaks, a car honks, a siren blows or some people just meander by the house on the sidewalk and he barks and barks. He is not really a bad dog. And though you may not be aware of it, he has been known to come to church.

He can be young, old, affectionate and even somewhat loyal, but mark it down he is going to bark.

He may bark about the giving being down or about giving too much to some particular ministry or work. He barks about the choir, the kids making noise in the service, people not being faithful in attendance or about the kinds of people that have started coming to the church. He will bark because the pastor has been there too long. At other times, he will bark because the pastor did not stay long enough. The temperature, the music and the length of the sermon will all set him off. It is probably good to remember that some dogs go bear hunting and others just bark at the moon.

Another dog that you may encounter is an unusual breed of dog that I call the growling tail wagger. Now get this picture! There are some dogs that will come running up to you with their teeth showing and growling. At the same time their tail is wagging as though they were welcoming their master home after he has been away for a while.

It is hard to know if this dog is extremely vicious or wonderfully hospitable. His exposed teeth say one thing and his wagging tail announces another. Although this is not your normal run of the kennel dog, you no doubt will run into some of these creatures sometime.

The best thing that I can tell you is just to be thoughtfully cautious. They may not bite you at all. Their tail may be telling the truth and their face just happened to be squinched up with their teeth showing. On the other hand, you could end up without a hand and learn later that his tail was disconnected from his angry brain. So approach carefully!

One last dog that you may run into is the loving, lazy lap dog. Many people love this kind of dog because they seem to be good, quiet companions. They do not fuss or frolic, but a pack of thieves could be coming into the house and at best they may raise their head and look at them. They are not particularly good in a crisis. They would not announce that there was a problem in or outside of the house. They spend most of their lives just waiting to eat and drink when you provide it for them. Occasionally, they will look around. But if dogs are the recipients of any spiritual gifts, theirs is just sitting down and doing nothing. They may be pretty dogs and may even be expensive dogs, but they do very little and contribute very little other than occasionally smiling at you.

Now if by chance you run into this dog in your own church, you may encourage them and prod them a little bit to be more active. But do not expect them to be real responsive to anything or to any program at any time. Do not be discouraged that their response to whatever is going on in the Kingdom of God is little more than a yawn or an occasional scratch for a flea.

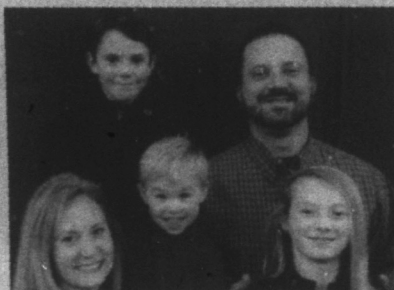
Of course, there are many other types of dogs that may show up and be a part of the circle of our lives. Some are very dangerous and others just seem to be passing by. Now before you get your binoculars out and start surveying your church or somebody else's church to see what kind of dogs may show up, it might be more important to take a glance in the mirror and ask, "Well, what kind of dog am I?" It would not hurt to ask the Lord to help you see clearly your own actions and attitudes.

The author can be contacted at directions@mbcb.org.

Staff Changes



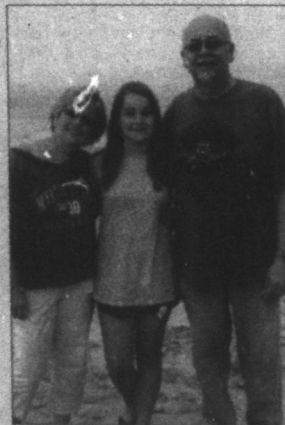
Rex Yancey has announced his resignation from **FIRST CHURCH, RIPLEY**, and his retirement from the full-time pastorate effective Mar. 16. Yancey has been in the ministry for over 48 years. He plans to do interim pastorates, supply work, and revivals. He has been the pastor of 10 different churches located from North Mississippi to South Mississippi and has preached over 400 revivals. He is the author of two books: *Jerked Up and Called*, and *Hot Off the Press*.



PUCKETT CHURCH, RANKIN ASSOCIATION, has called Marcus Clay Canoy as Pastor effective March 2. Pictured are McCoy, wife Whitney, and children, Kayleigh, Nolan, and Jase.



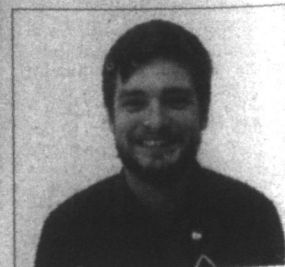
WEST END CHURCH, WEST POINT, has called Chris Layton as pastor. Shown are Layton, his wife Shena, and daughter Kristen. The Laytons have two other daughters, Courtney and Lori.



SPRINGDALE CHURCH, RIPLEY has called Anthony Mitchell as Minister of Music and Education and Director of Senior Saints. He and his wife Dorothy have a daughter, Shelby.

In other Staff News:

➤ Mark Sandifer has joined the staff of **Country Woods Church, Byram** as Discipleship & Missions Pastor. Mark previously served as Missions Pastor at Morrison Heights Baptist Church in Clinton. Mark is a graduate of Mississippi College and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.



CRESTVIEW CHURCH, PETAL, has called Kenny Keeton as minister of music.

BIBL iO CIPHER

WPWFK OCFV CX YCV SN LQFW: RW SN

G NRSWAV QDEC ERWB ERGE LQE

ERWSF EFQNE SD RSB.

LFCPWPHN ERSFEK: XSPW

Clue: K = Y

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Isaiah 55:11

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MS POSITIONS

STEELE BAPTIST CHURCH IN FOREST, MS, IS SEEKING A FULL-TIME PASTOR/PREACHER. Please send resumes to: Steele Baptist Church, c/o Glyn Edwards, 8977 Hwy 21, Forest, MS 39074 or email to chamell_sharp@att.net

WESSON, SYLVARENA BAPTIST IS SEEKING A PART-TIME YOUTH DIRECTOR. Interested person(s) must FAX Resume to 601.643.0560 or call 601.695.3645.

PONTOTOC FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH IS SEEKING A FULL-TIME STUDENT MINISTER. Please send resumes to Mr. Wally Henry, First Baptist Church, 31 Washington Street, Pontotoc, MS 38863.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH IN KOSCIUSKO, MS IS SEEKING A FULL-TIME CHILDREN'S MINISTER. Please send resume to First Baptist Church, Attn: Personnel Committee, P.O. Box 70, Kosciusko, MS 39090.

ROSE HILL FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH IS SEEKING A BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR. Please send resumes to 2137 CR. 372 Enterprise, MS 39330 or email: dustyg73@gmail.com

INDIAN SPRINGS BAPTIST CHURCH IN LAUREL, MISSISSIPPI, IS IN IMMEDIATE NEED OF A PART-TIME MUSIC DIRECTOR. If interested, send resume to Indian Springs Baptist Church, 500 Indian Springs Church Road, Laurel, MS 39443

EMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH OF GREENVILLE, MS IS IN SEARCH OF A FULL-TIME CHILDREN'S PASTOR. Please send resumes to Emmanuel Baptist Church, Attn: Tommy Burford, 3800 Glendale Rd, Greenville, MS 38704 or email to tb_birdlegs@yahoo.com

MT. OLIVE BAPTIST CHURCH, SMITHDALE, MS IS PRAYERFULLY SEARCHING FOR A BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC. Resumes may be emailed to joycehewson@bellsouth.net or mailed to: Mt. Olive Baptist Church, Attention: Minister of Music Search Committee, 5599 Hwy 570, Smithdale, MS 39664

CENTER TERRACE BAPTIST CHURCH, CANTON, MS, IS SEEKING AN ORGANIST. Contact the church at P.O. Box 78, Canton, MS 39046 or 601-859-4186.

Bible study makes debut with latest movie on life of Christ

NASHVILLE (BP) — Baptist pastor and The New York Times best-selling author Rick Warren is partnering with LifeWay Christian Resources in Nashville to release a Bible study for the upcoming movie from 20th Century Fox on the life of Christ entitled, *Son of God*.

The small group curriculum resource by Warren, senior pastor of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Ca. is a companion piece to *Son of God*, produced by husband-and-wife team Mark Burnett and Roma Downey.

The study became available Feb. 15, two weeks before the movie hits theaters Feb. 28.

Son of God: The Life of Jesus in You, is a DVD small group Bible study, which features Warren explaining how you can find your purpose in studying the life of Jesus. The study is available at LifeWay Stores and LifeWay.com/SonofGod.

"There's nothing more important you can do with your life than spending time getting to know Jesus," said Warren, who also leads the Purpose Driven Network of churches, a global coalition of congregations in 162 countries.

Through the *Son of God* study, people will receive practical teaching on the life of Jesus and its impact on individual lives and life purpose. Jesus' teaching transforms from the inside out.

The six-session study features video clips from the theatrical movie and videos from Warren explaining Jesus' teachings and their impact on people's lives.



Topics include baptism, temptation, suffering, death, resurrection and ministry.

Scenes from the movie such as Jesus being baptized by John the Baptist will help illustrate each topic.

Son of God is the second Bible-based production from Downey and Burnett. The first was *The Bible*, the history-making miniseries on the History Channel viewed by more than 100 million people last spring.

Burnett said bringing the full story of Jesus' teaching and ministry to the big screen — the first time it's been done by a major Hollywood studio in more than 50 years — is long overdue. "A story larger than life needs to be experienced larger than life," he said.

"Now people can bring their family, friends and neighbors to experience together the incredible story of Jesus," Downey said. "We pray this film will really spread the word about Jesus' love and sacrifice for all of us."

The couple said they hope the movie draws generations of people closer to Jesus. "We don't want the experience to end for audiences when the credits roll," Burnett said. "There is so much to learn from and apply to our everyday lives in the things Jesus did and said. So the companion study is essential for congregations to dig deeper into the life lessons of Jesus ministry."

Downey, an Emmy-nominated actress, is best known for her recurring role on the television program, *Touched by an Angel*. Burnett, a five-time Emmy winner, is the creator of hit shows such as *Survivor*, *The Voice*, *The Apprentice*, and *Shark Tank*.

The couple launched *LightWorkers Media* in 2011 with the children's DVD and book series *Little Angels* and its companion, *Little Angels Storybook Bible*. *LightWorkers Media* produced the 10-hour miniseries *The Bible* and the feature film *Son of God* for 20th Century Fox.

Fourth of eight courses open for bivo, other music leaders

JACKSON, Ms. (Special) — March 2014 begins the fourth of eight courses for bivocational and other music leaders offered at five locations in Mississippi, sponsored by the Church Music Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board in cooperation with the Providence Learning Center of New Orleans Seminary.

The course, *Reading Music: Harmony/Melody*, will meet once a week for two hours for eight consecutive weeks (the Brookhaven location meets on Saturday) at the following locations and times:

■ First Church, Cleveland, beginning March 17, 6-8 p.m. Alan Berry, teacher (662) 843-2701.

■ First Church, Marion, beginning March 3, 6:30-8:30 p.m. Buddy McElroy, teacher (601) 938-8668.

■ Easthaven Church, Brookhaven, beginning March 22, 9-11 a.m. Mark Hamilton, teacher, (601) 835-6607.

■ First Church, Booneville, beginning March 18, 6:30-8:30 p.m. LuAnne Ford, teacher, (662) 728-6272.

■ Handsboro Church, Gulfport, beginning March 18, 7-9 p.m. Louis White, teacher (228) 860-9616.

The eight courses are *Basic Conducting*; *Worship/Worship Planning*; *Reading Music: Rhythm/Pitch*; *Reading Music: Harmony/Melody*; *Songs and Hymns for Worship*; *Building Your Music Ministry*; *Church Music Resources*; *Class Voice*.

The courses are designed to provide basic training for bivocational music directors and other music leaders in churches.

The cycle of courses is scheduled over a two-year period. Each course is independent and has no prerequisite. Each student who completes the eight courses earns a certificate from the Providence Learning Center of New Orleans Seminary.

There is a one-time enrollment fee of \$25.00. The cost of each course is \$100.00. A \$60.00 scholarship is available for all first-time students. Students already enrolled are not eligible. The grant is limited to one person per church.

For more information, contact the teachers listed above or Slater Murphy, MBCB Church Music Director, at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3276 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 276. E-mail: smurphy@mbcb.org

Just for the Record



COVINGTON - JEFF DAVIS ASSOCIATION Upward Basketball ended its 2nd annual season with an awards celebration. The kids were recognized for their basketball skills, Bible verse memory work, and good sportsmanship.



The JOY (Just Older Youth) group from **PINEVIEW CHURCH, HATTIESBURG**, toured William Carey University and the William Carey Center Feb. 6.



FIRST CHURCH, BRUCE, hosted Debby Ackerman, national WMU president, at the Area IV WMU fall meeting. Shown, front, are Judy Anderson and Ackerman; back, Janet Green and Kay Cassibry.



The Brotherhood of **PLEASANT RIDGE CHURCH, WOODLAND**, served a Valentine breakfast. Shown, front, are Floyd Pumphrey, John Woodruff, Carter Bliven, and George Washington; back, Lewis Easter, Frank Woodruff, Wade Mathis, Jon Arledge, and Frank Gregg.



BRANDON BAPTIST CHURCH

FAMILY CELEBRATION DAY
SUNDAY, MARCH 2, 2014



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New Orleans
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DR. RHONDA KELLEY
President's Wife,
New Orleans
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Theological
Seminary

DR. BLAKE NEWSOME
New Orleans
Baptist
Theological
Seminary

MRS. BROOKE NEWSOME
Wife of Dr. Blake
Newsome,
New Orleans
Baptist
Theological
Seminary



CALVARY CHURCH, SUMMIT, held a Valentine Party Feb. 9 for the children's classes. Activities included making cards for the nursing home, story time, pictures, pizza, and more.



NEW LIBERTY CHURCH, MORTON, held its 2nd annual Children's Ministry Day Feb. 15. The day included Bible study, music, and missions opportunities. The participants assembled and delivered bags to the Crisis Pregnancy Center in Forest, and made door hangers for residents of the MS Care Center, Morton. There were 43 total participants.

Just for the Record

The RAs and GAs of **MCLAURIN HEIGHTS CHURCH, PEARL**, sponsored Lunch With Lottie in November and received \$1043.03 in donations for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.



Twenty Senior Sunday School members of **CALVARY CHURCH, BOGUE CHITTO**, enjoyed a night of food and fellowship at Shivers Creek Fish House.

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The 4 and 5 year olds of **CALVARY CHURCH, VICKSBURG**, made Valentine crafts for their parents.

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All paid participants will receive a free pass to the Rick & Bubba Outdoor Expo, the same weekend in the BJCC Exhibition Hall!

LifeWay Research: Americans concerned about religious liberty

NASHVILLE (BP) — A pair of LifeWay Research surveys found that both American pastors and other Americans say religious liberty is important, but they don't always agree on how much liberty is enough or too much.

Religious liberty is the issue at the heart of the upcoming U.S. Supreme Court hearings involving the privately-owned Hobby Lobby company and the Obama Administration over the U.S. Health and Human Services contraceptive mandate, which forces insurance plans to cover drugs that can induce abortion.

Hobby Lobby is fighting the mandate, and the case is slated to be heard by the Supreme Court. It's a dispute that is unlikely to go away, no matter what the Supreme Court decides.

American preachers, it turns out, are more than a bit uneasy about religious liberty these days, according to LifeWay Research, a division of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention headquartered in Nashville.

Survey results

The survey found that seven out of 10 senior pastors at Protestant churches said religious liberty is on the decline in America. About seven in 10 also said Christians have lost or are losing the culture war. The telephone survey of Protestant senior pastors was taken Sept. 4-19, 2013.

Seventy percent agree with the statement, "Religious liberty is on the decline in America." Twenty-seven percent disagree. Self-identified evangelical pastors (81%) are more likely to agree than mainline pastors (47%).

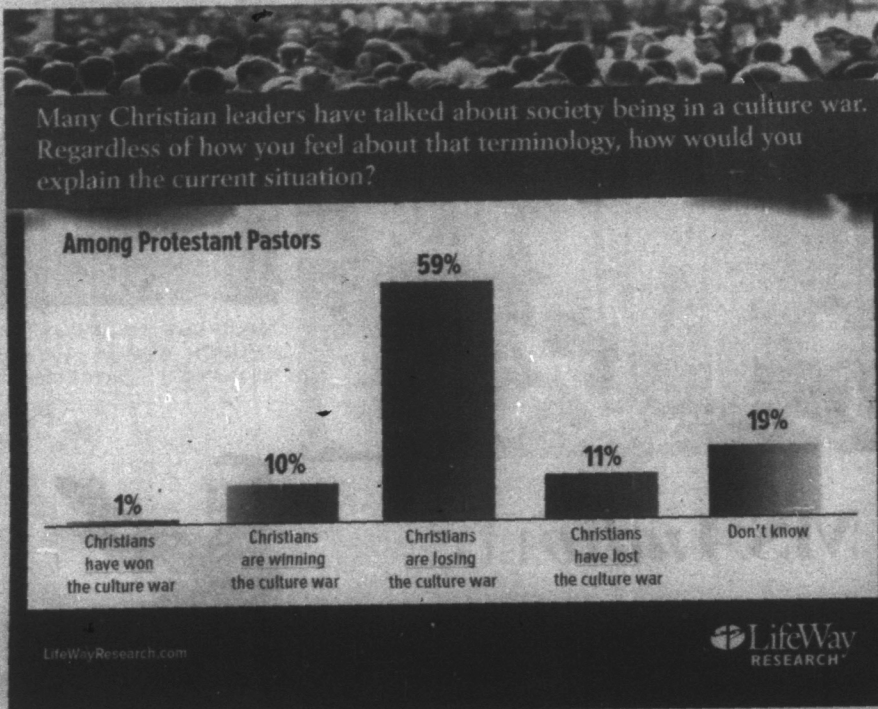
Researchers also asked pastors to respond to this question: "Many Christian leaders have talked about society being in a culture war. Regardless of how you feel about that terminology, how would you explain the current situation?"

Nearly six in 10 (59%) say Christians are losing. One in 10 (11%) say the culture war is already lost. Few (10%) say Christians are winning the culture war. Evangelical pastors (79%) are more likely than mainline pastors (60%) to say Christians are losing or have lost the culture war.

Mainline pastors (30%) are also most likely to say they "don't know" when asked about the culture war. By contrast, 13% of evangelicals said they don't know. Overall, one in five pastors (19%) said they don't know.

Shifting America

Some of the unease about religious liberty is due to shifts



in American culture and church practice, said Ed Stetzer, president of LifeWay Research.

In the 1960s, nearly two-thirds of Americans were Protestants. Today, they make up less than half of the population, according to the General Social Survey. Fewer Protestants means less cultural power, Stetzer said.

In the past, he said, Christians — and Protestants in particular — took it for granted that Americans would look to the church for guidance on moral issues. Churches, he said, were seen as being good for society and so were given special privileges like exemptions from taxes and other laws.

"Even if people did not go to church, they looked to the church," Stetzer explained.

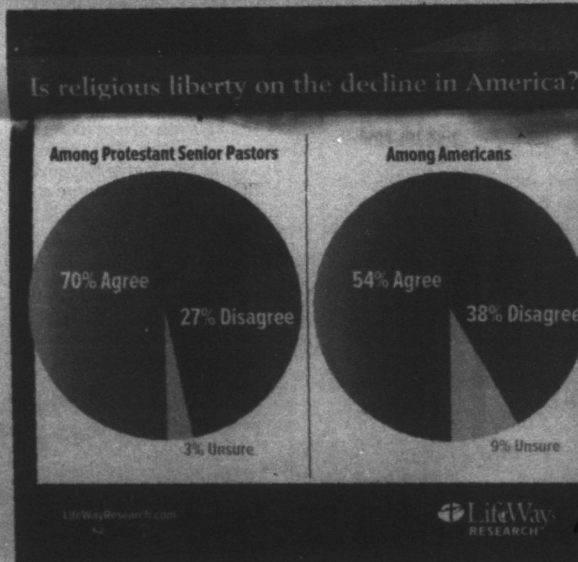
That's no longer the case as the government and culture no longer defer to Protestant Christians, which makes pastors and their congregations nervous.

"They feel like in some ways there was a pact made at the founding of the country, between God and America," he said. "That pact has been broken."

The upside

That's not all bad news, Stetzer said. "The fact that 'Christian' is not just a demographic category can have a positive side," Stetzer said, as it means that Protestants and other Christians have to be more active in living out their faith.

It also has political and social consequences, as a sizable number of Protestants and oth-



er Christians run into conflicts with societal norms on issues like sexuality and marriage and other issues.

Protestants have to think through a new strategy that defends their religious liberty but also acknowledges that conflict, Stetzer said.

Several recent court battles also may play a role, said Thomas Kidd, professor of history at Baylor University, and author of *God of Liberty: A Religious History of the American Revolution*.

Kidd pointed to the Hobby Lobby case as well as the Supreme Court's 2012 *Hosanna-*

Tabor ruling. Both involve disputes between the government and religious groups over exemptions from federal law. In both cases, religious liberty was seen as less important than other issues like non-discrimination or healthcare, Kidd said.

"There's a real sense that something has changed dramatically," he said. "Some questions about the meaning of religious liberty are now in play."

Those court battles, as well as the decline in Protestant cultural power, can make pastors nervous. "Less clout plus

more aggressive policy creates a sense of crisis," he said.

People's mood gloomy

LifeWay researchers also found similar concerns about religious liberty in a separate telephone survey of 1,001 Americans, conducted Sept. 6-10, 2013.

More than half (54%) agree with the statement, "Religious liberty is on the decline in America." About four in 10 (38%) disagree. Half (50%) also agree with the statement: "Christians increasingly are confronted by intolerance in America today." Thirty nine percent disagree.

Researchers also found about a third of Americans (34%) say Christians complain too much about how they are treated.

Scott McConnell, vice president of LifeWay Research, said concerns about religious liberty have become widespread. "Half of Americans say that religious liberty is on the decline. That's a lot of people."

Many of the new freedoms Americans want are less compatible with religion, McConnell said. Freedoms always have limits, he added, and Americans disagree about how to weigh religious liberty against other concerns.

"It's not that people don't care about religious liberty. It's that other values are seen as more important."

Methodologies

The telephone survey of 1,007 Protestant pastors was conducted Sept. 4-19, 2013. The calling list was randomly drawn from a stratified list of Protestant churches. Each interview was conducted with the senior pastor, minister, or priest of the church called. Responses were weighted to reflect the geographic distribution and denominational groups of Protestant churches. The sample provides 95% confidence that the sampling error does not exceed plus or minus 3.1 percentage points. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups.

The telephone survey of 1,001 adult Americans was conducted Sept. 6-10, 2013. Interviews were conducted in either English or Spanish. Both listed and unlisted numbers were called and approximately 20% of the sample was reached by cell phone. Responses were weighted by age, gender, education, race/Hispanic ethnicity, region, and CBSA market size to more accurately reflect the population. The sample provides 95% confidence that the sampling error does not exceed plus or minus 3.1 percentage points. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups.

COLLAPSE

cont. from p. 1

Sunday where some of the people in the building at the time of the collapse gave testimony about their deliverance from harm through the grace of God.

"There were parents and others at the service who do not attend church regularly, who heard those testimonies and witnessed us worshipping and thanking God. If not for the incident the Wednesday night before, many of them would not have been in church with us last Sunday," Davis said.

"God used this incident as a way to reach people who otherwise would not have heard the testimonies of those involved, the gratitude of the congregation, and the presentation of the Gospel."

News media reported that 75-80 people were in the Family Life Center at the time of the collapse. There were no injuries that required extensive treatment or hospitalization.

Davis said the church is also grateful for the manner in which the community surrounding the church has reacted to the incident. "The community has come alongside us, offering to help any way they can," he pointed out.

Davis said he and the church realize that a very different kind of Sunday service could have been necessary, given the nature of the collapse and the number of people involved. "We're going to continue thanking the Lord for delivering us from that possibility," he said.

The church's marquee sign, mounted in front of the sanctuary next door to the Family Life Center, contained a message that was placed there some time before the Wednesday evening crisis: "Trust in the Lord that you will have peace and understanding." The sign now has special meaning to church members and non-members alike.

"All the people who came to the worship service on Sunday saw that message," Davis said.

It's too early to know what will happen to the present Family Life Center structure, Davis said, but he knows one thing for sure.

"Freedom Baptist Church will have a Family Life Center ministry again. There's no way we won't have a Family Life Center, for our students and our church family," he said.

For more information, contact the church at 971 Freedom Road, Laurel, MS 39443. Telephone: (601) 428-1955.



TO THE POINT — The message on the marquee sign in front of Freedom Church's sanctuary has special meaning in the aftermath of the collapse of the second floor of the Family Life Center next door, even though the message was placed there some time before the Feb. 19 incident. The church is located in the Myrick community, near Laurel. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted. Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged or returned. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

PAGE

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While CP giving numbers among churches have decreased, Page said state giving percentages have risen. The average percentage of CP gifts forwarded to SBC causes from 33 state conventions has gone from 34.7% in 2001 to 38.2%, according to the latest figures.

However, because CP giving from churches has decreased, the dollar amount from states has only increased from \$182 million in 2004 to \$183 million in 2013.

State conventions also are streamlining staff. From 2000-13, the number of state convention staff has dropped from 1,750 to 1,350, Page reported. Some conventions are becoming "extremely focused" to better meet the needs of churches, he added.

"Now some of them say, 'We didn't have a choice. We had to. The money quit coming in,' but some have done this purposefully... State conventions are trying to do that which they believe their churches are calling for and that's to send more to the national level so

that we might touch this lost world for Christ."

While giving patterns and trends continue to fluctuate, Page said he will remain firm on his commitment to promoting the Cooperative Program.

"I know that church giving is different these days but I will not back away from what I believe is the best Acts 1:8 strategy that [Southern Baptists] ever had... I will tell you I'm excited about the unity that we've had in this body by the Spirit, a passion for reaching this world for Christ and I'm excited about it."

Truth is not relative.

Find it in the One who is the way, truth, and life.

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

THE VILLAGE VIEW



Dr. Rory Lee, Executive Director

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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

NOVEMBER 2013

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Mr. & Mrs. Bob Albritton
Mr. & Mrs. Barney J. Albritton
Mrs. Nita Albritton
Mr. & Mrs. Barney J. Albritton
Mr. & Mrs. Paul Albritton
Mr. & Mrs. Barney J. Albritton
Elizabeth & Larry Alderman
Ms. Pauline R. Baine
Mr. & Mrs. Stuart Allen
Mr. & Mrs. John Hobbs
Ms. Dolly Hooper
Ms. Brecken Anderson
Mrs. Candy P. Anderson
Brennan & Elizabeth Anderson
Mrs. Candy P. Anderson
Patsy and Perry Atherton

Mrs. Virginia H. Atherton
Tri Avis
Mr. & Mrs. Bill Newsom
Will Avis
Mr. & Mrs. Bill Newsom
Mr. Wallace Bailey
Mr. & Mrs. Brian L. Houston
Mr. & Mrs. Warren Bailey
Mr. & Mrs. John Hobbs
Fred & Tammy Baine
Ms. Pauline R. Baine
Ms. Margaret Barber
Ms. Mary H. McMillin
Tommy & Betty Barrett
Cecil & Penny Washington
Ms. Carolyn Baxter
Immanuel BC
Keenagers
Ray & Doris Bensley
Mr. & Mrs. Richard E. New
Rev. & Mrs. Brad Beckwith & Family
Cecil & Penny Washington
Mr. & Mrs. John Hobbs
Mrs. Lanell Bergin
Lydian SSC, FBC Soso
Rev. & Mrs. Alan Berry & Family
Cecil & Penny Washington
Mr. & Mrs. John Hobbs
Ms. Grace Bigler
Mr. & Mrs. Tom Garrett
Ms. Laura Bigler
Mr. & Mrs. Tom Garrett
Ms. Jo Blackwell
Winsome SSC,
Petal-Harvey BC
Mrs. Marie Blair
Ms. Mary Lou Blair
and Family
Jennifer & David Blakeslee
Mrs. Candy P. Anderson
Mr. Don Blasingame
Mr. & Mrs. J. B. Immon
Mrs. Marilyn Brady
James & Janet Dykes
Rev. Jimmy & Billie Brelaud
Cecil & Penny Washington
Linda Brinkerhoff
Ms. Wilma Nell Lee
Mr. & Mrs. Bobby Brock
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Kyzar
Rev. Billy Brumfield
L. Hilderbrand Class,
Immanuel BC
Rev. & Mrs. Milton Burd
Mr. & Mrs. John Hobbs
Rev. Milton & Jerry Burd
Cecil & Penny Washington
Mrs. Betty Burnett
Mrs. Catherine S. Ferguson
Dr. & Mrs. Lamar Burrow
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Kyzar
Ms. Karen Byrd
Mr. Jeff Bryan
Ms. Joy Carpenter
Mrs. Jan Wallace
Mr. & Mrs. Lynwood Carr
Dr. & Mrs. Victor L. Walsh
Mr. & Mrs. Lynwood Carr
Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy W. Hardy

Seek Wisdom's Way • Proverbs 1:1-19

As a parent and now as a granddad, the pursuit of wisdom is a high priority in my life. One reason is that I do not want to make the same unwise decisions I have made in the past. I believe more than ever, people are pulled to and fro by many voices telling them which decision is best for them. The prevalent world thought is that there is no one way that is right for everyone. What is wisdom for you may not be wisdom for me. Our study in Proverbs seeks to assure us that there is a standard of wisdom that is constant and right for everyone and we are expected to seek that wisdom.

Guide to Wisdom (1:1-6)

Before we can really understand how important wisdom is in our lives, we first must understand what wisdom is. For many, wisdom is the gaining of knowledge. It is as if the more knowledge you gain, the wiser you become. When we look at wisdom in scripture, we learn that wisdom is the ability to make the proper choice at the proper time. Wisdom is knowing how to use the knowledge you have perfectly in every situation that arises in your life. When we see it from this viewpoint we realize we fall very short of having true wisdom. Solomon is reminding us in Proverbs 1 that only

God knows how to use knowledge perfectly in every situation, so we are advised to live according to God's plan. Only with God's help can we ever hope to be wise.

Key To Knowledge (1:7)

As we move to verse 7, it states very plainly that our pursuit of wisdom begins with a "fear of the Lord." The word

"fear" in this case means that we should revere, love and trust God. Because of our reverence, love, and trust

in God we can begin to understand how to use the knowledge we have gained. The "fool" is the person or persons who believe that they do not need God and therefore reject any notion that they need wisdom or instruction. They consider themselves to be self-sufficient and are in direct rebellion to God's principles for living. When we live in the "fear of the Lord" we are demonstrating knowledge and wisdom in our lives.



Explore the Bible

with Huey Dedmon

and guidance all through their lives. It is very easy to recognize children who have accepted the instructions

of their parents. It is also easy to recognize those who are rejecting the guidance of their parents. Again, we must see that being wise and being able to teach our children and have our children accept our teaching all goes back to our reverence, love, and trust in God. Parents and children must trust in God.

Warning Against Folly (1:10-19)

I remember as a teenager, the times

I would get in trouble the most, were when I would hang out with the people in my school who had no or very little parental guidance. I could not see it then, but looking back it is as plain as day. The warning given here is one that will keep us out of situations that will bring trouble and heartache in our lives. There are two things that come into play here. One is that parents have lived longer, and have had more time to gain wisdom through their relationship with God. The other is that children have not had that time, like me as a teenager. I could not resist the temptation to be involved in what the others were doing, even when I knew it was wrong. Not only are we warned in this passage, but we are enlightened as to the result of a person's involvement in sin and folly. Verse 18 tells us that such people "set an ambush to kill themselves; they attack their own lives." Remember that the teachings of God's Word deal with our eternal life and not just our temporal life. When we seek wisdom from God, we are acknowledging that He is the source of true wisdom.

Dedmon is Associate Pastor for Education and Outreach, Brandon Church, Brandon.

Good Work • Genesis 1:28; 2:8-9, 15-17

Literally from day one, God has modeled for us the value and importance of work. The Word of God begins with The Work of God as He brings forth all of creation. God made the earth and filled it. God made the skies and filled them. God made the seas and filled them. This holy work of God culminated in the creation of man.

I fully realize that Genesis 1:1 does not begin with The Trinity singing together, "Heigh Ho, Heigh Ho, it's off to work we go!" However, joyfully stepping in time with the example of our Creator, we will be reminded through these lessons that the plan of God included the responsibility of meaningful work and the value and balance achieved when work is accompanied with times of worshipful rest.

Genesis 1:26 shows that BEFORE God made mankind, the plan was for man to be a worker. "Let Us make man in Our image. Let them (present man and future man) rule over the creatures of the sea and the sky and the earth." God designed his worker then created him. After a blessing, man was also commanded to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.

God planted a garden called "delight" which is the meaning of the word Eden. Work was never intended

to be drudgery. Genesis 2:15 gives the first job description recorded in scripture. God took the man and put the man in the garden. His job was to cultivate (serve) and keep (preserve) the garden. No salary was discussed. The first job description was to live in harmony with the employer with no competition. Sounds like a thirteenth floor corner office job with a leather chair and a great window view to me.

Please notice that work is not, I repeat NOT, a curse. Before the fall, work

was the beautiful red bow surrounding the creation package presented to man by his Creator. Work was designed to be our partnership with the Creator Himself Who made us and called us and assigned us tasks to accomplish. There was a break time in the cool of the evening of each day. The workers would meet together and walk side-by-side with the Creator in the garden and revel in the relationship this work provided: plant, tend,

grow, enjoy. There was a blessed routine with this work that brought comfort and encouraged growth and development through mutual sharing.

Every meaningful job description contains prohibitions. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was off limits. The amazing thing about the prohibition was this: only ONE TREE was off limits. The garden was filled

with freedom to make the right choice. After Adam had named all of the creatures, God blessed

him with a true co-worker named Eve. Adam told Eve about the fine print of his job description, but they were both tempted to ignore it by the first door-to-door sales pitch that slid uninvited through the garden gate. They took the bait and ate the forbidden fruit.

God was not interested in workman's compensation when He had required workman's cooperation. Their decision to violate company policy was an eviction notice which landed them

squarely outside the service entrance to the garden. Work that was designed by God to produce joy and fulfillment now came at a price of thorns, thistles, blood, sweat and tears.

God was not done with His perfect work. God planned before time to send His Son Jesus to complete the work necessary to restore His certain-to-be-broken working relationship with man. The real work was always in the heart of God. Displayed in the life of Jesus was work that only God could do. From His famous words, "Mom, I must be about my Father's Business!" at age twelve all the way to, "Father, It is Finished!" from the cross, Jesus was working on our behalf to restore the relationship between God and man.

Right now, God The Holy Spirit is at work drawing all men to God The Son Jesus Who will point them to God The Father. The Trinity is an eternally perfect working partnership. God still calls His creation to join His team. Tragically, we jostle for position and step on lesser folks and pad our retirement accounts and grin all the way to the bank. God calls us back to Eden, the place of delight. He wants us to work WITH Him.

Brown is staff evangelist at First Church, Richland

Bible Studies for Life

with Becky Brown



causes, or to any SBC entity.

■ One additional messenger for each \$6,000 the church contributes in the preceding year through the same combination of the Cooperative Pro-

gram, designated gifts through the Executive Committee for convention causes, or to any SBC entity.

The \$6,000 figure was arrived at by adjusting for infla-

tion and other factors since 1888. It is meant to be comparable to the \$250 figure adopted 126 years ago.

Additional updates to Article III will be discussed, with

a Q&A on the matter to appear in SBC Life magazine and other outlets at the request of SBC President Fred Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Church in New Orleans.

MESSANGER

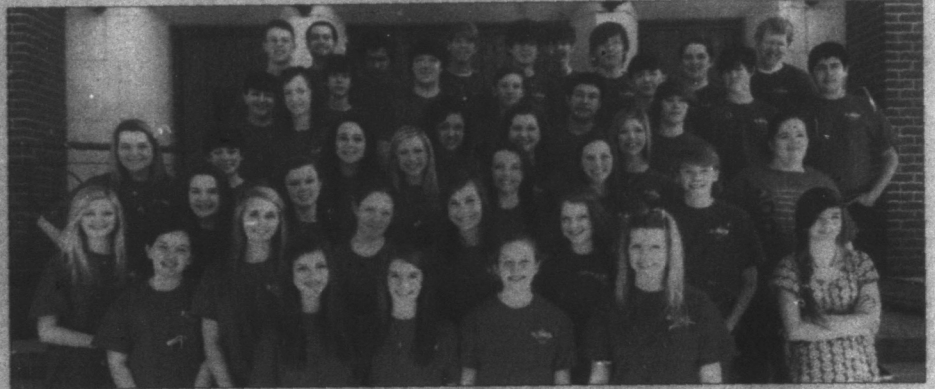
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Cooperative Program, designated gifts through the Executive Committee for convention

Just for the Record



Three sponsored kids spent a few hours rocking in a "Rock-a-Thon" to raise money for youth activities at **NEW BETHEL CHURCH, CARROLL COUNTY**. They are, from left, Hannah Hicks holding Cadi-Lane Goss; Abby Swindle holding Carlie Hopkins; and Annie Brewer.



Students from **FIRST CHURCH, EUPORA**, were among hundreds of teenagers participating in the Webster County DiscipleNow weekend at First Church, Mathiston, Feb. 14 - 16.



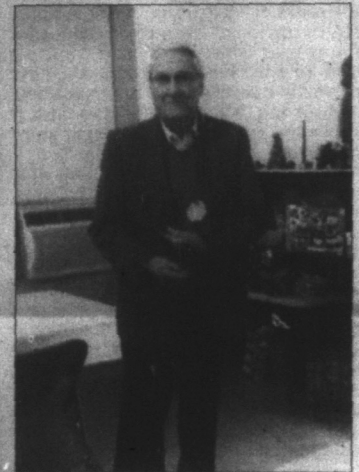
ETHEL CHURCH, ETHEL, held a baby dedication Feb. 2 for Anslee and Walker Wheelless, Clark Cauthen, Rye Edwards, Addison Verner, and Case Pettit. Present in the photo with the children are pastor Joey Bernard and the parents.



CRANE CREEK CHURCH, NECAISE CROSSING, held a deacon ordination recently. Shown are Chris and Heidi Smith with children, Addison and Colin, and Michael and Kathy Slade. Harry Davis, pastor.

In other Church News:

➤ **First Church, Lumberton**, will host the Florida Boys in concert Feb. 28, 7 p.m. Love offering. John R. Sapp, pastor.



OAK GROVE CHURCH, PRENTISS, recognized Jack D. Berry for over 25 years of service as church treasurer. Berry was presented a clock by pastor Terry Wallace.



A wild game supper was held at **BEULAH CHURCH, DECATUR**, Feb. 9. Shown are guest speaker T.J. Jennings, Elton Bryan, and pastor Gary Rivers.



The youth group of **DRY CREEK CHURCH, SIMPSON COUNTY**, participated in youth day and assumed positions of teaching in Sunday School, leading in music and preaching.



The children of **HOPE CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA**, participated in Children's Ministry Day. They prepared fruit baskets and delivered them to families in the community. Afterwards they were treated to a Valentine's party. Dennis Duvall, pastor.



The GAs of **CALVARY CHURCH, BOGUE CHITTO**, recently held a fun night, including makeovers, making Valentine cards, homemade pizzas, and a talent show. Jenny Leggett, leader; Hal Hatten, pastor.



EAST PHILADELPHIA CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA, licensed Zach Butler to the gospel ministry. Shown are Butler and Rusty Parsons.